

Nationalists in Vilnius Turn Down Soviet Call for New Secession Law

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Special to The New York Times

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Jan. 12 — Nationalist leaders in the Soviet republic of Lithuania today rejected a Kremlin call for a new law outlining the procedures when a republic seeks to secede from the Soviet Union. The proposal was called a "propagandist trap" and an "attempt to deceive the people of Lithuania."

A day after President Mikhail S. Gorbachev tried to placate advocates of independence here by assuring them that the Soviet Parliament was drafting such a law, nationalists denounced the offer as a ruse designed to distract attention from real independence.

"It is a propagandist trap so that people might think it is something new and progressive," said Vytautas Landsbergis, the president of the Lithuanian popular front, called Sajudis, a pro-independence organization widely supported by Lithuanians.

[Unrest continued in the southern Soviet Union, as Azerbaijanis blockaded government offices and seized a radio station in a Caspian Sea port, and Georgians demanding independence drove bureaucrats from their offices in the Caucasus, according to reports in Moscow. Page 6.]

Contending with nationalist unrest has become a big part of Mr. Gorbachev's job, with Lithuania's desire to

restore the independent statehood it held before Soviet annexation in 1940 the focus of his trip here. Ostensibly he and 40 Communist Party leaders from Moscow came here to assess the mood among rank-and-file party members after the local party organization defied Moscow by voting last month to split with the central party, allying itself with growing separatist sentiment.

While emphasizing that Moscow respects the right of a republic to secede,

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Mr. Gorbachev and the other Communist officials have stressed the complexity, high costs and dire consequences of such a move.

None of the Kremlin representatives elaborated on details of the new law except to say that when the draft was completed, it would be put up for a nationwide discussion and referendum.

"By the time that law is completed and voted on, it will probably contain so many conditions that it will make it virtually impossible to secede," said Romualdas Ozolas, a member of the politburo of the breakaway Lithuanian Party. "It is nothing more than an attempt to deceive the people of Lithuania."

Mr. Gorbachev first spoke of the planned law in a meeting Thursday with Lithuanian intellectuals, which was broadcast today on television.

The Soviet leader said that he supported the right of "self-determination, up to and including separation" and that he had ordered the drafting of a secession law.

But he told the audience, which repeatedly interrupted him with shouts for complete independence, that such a process would be far from easy.

'This Is Not Politics'

"If someone thinks this is all so easy, that today or tomorrow you will have elections, get together, raise your hands and leave the Soviet Union — well, this is not politics," Mr. Gorbachev said. "It does not even remotely smell of politics. It is simply something not serious."

He accused unidentified people in the republic of feeding people "fairy tales" about what life would be like if Lithuania seceded. He said an honest explanation of all the consequences of such a move was needed before a referendum was held to decide the matter.

In the meeting, Mr. Gorbachev was alternately pedantic and conciliatory, appealing to the audience to cooperate



The New York Times/Jan. 13, 1990

Nationalists in Lithuania rejected an offer from Moscow, and tensions grew in the Lenkoran area of Azerbaijan.



As nationalist leaders in Lithuania denounced his assurances that Moscow respects the right to secede, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev went to Siauliai, 125 miles from Vilnius, to visit a col-

with him in rejuvenating the Soviet Union, then scolding them for being unrealistic.

In his parting words to the meeting, Mr. Gorbachev stood up and wagging his finger sternly at the audience, warned: "Today I am your friend. But if you choose a different way, I will do everything to show that you are leading your people to a dead end."

Visits to Rural Areas

Today, touring cities and rural areas across the republic, Mr. Gorbachev encountered the same intense longing for independence that met him here in the Lithuanian capital on Thursday.

"We live in friendship, but what's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine," said a woman at a collective farm in Siauliai, in central Lithuania.

While Mr. Gorbachev repeatedly offered the Lithuanians "independence" as a sovereign unit within a reorganized and voluntary Soviet federation, most people interviewed here said real independence could be found only outside the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

Lithuania was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940 along with the Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia and parts of Moldavia after Stalin and Hitler signed a secret treaty dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence.

The parliaments of all three Baltic republics and the Soviet Congress have declared the pact illegal.

Evaluating Mr. Gorbachev's announcement of the promised law on secession, some people here said Lithuania had never legally joined the Soviet Union and therefore did not need Moscow's approval to leave.

No Marriage, No Divorce

Algimantas Cekuolis, a member of the Sajudis council, said Mr. Gorbachev was proposing to adopt a divorce law when the Lithuanians did not even consider themselves married.

Other Sajudis leaders said that acknowledging the legitimacy of the secession law would trap them into automatic admission that the Soviet Union had a valid claim to Lithuania.

Yuri D. Maslyukov, the head of the Soviet Planning Commission and a Politburo member, told factory workers here this week that if Lithuania seceded, it would have to pay compensation to those residents who chose to relocate in the Soviet Union.

Sajudis leaders responded angrily today that Moscow owed the people of Lithuania more in reparations for the people sent to Siberia and executed by Stalin when the country was annexed.